incident, King Birednra and Queen Aishwarya along with some other members of the Royal Family of Nepal were shot dead on June 1, 2001. Crown Prince Dipendra, who was involved in the shoot out, also succumbed to his injuries and died on June 4, 2001. Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, younger brother of Late King Birendra,was pronounced the new King by the Royal Council of Nepal and was enthroned on June 4, 2001.

Immediately after the tragic incident, Government of India relealsed a statement which was read out by the External Affairs Minister on June 2. It stated that as a close neighbour and friend, India conveyed its heartfelt condolences to the mourning nation of the Kingdom of Nepal. A three day State mourning was declared by Government of India as a mark of respect. On the same day, the Indian Cabinet passed a Resolution at a specially convened emergency meeting. Rashtrapatiji conveyed his condolences to the new Kng. PM sent letters of condolence to the Queen Mother and the then PM Girija Prasad Koirala. While expressing condolences, confidence was expressed that friendship and co-operation would continue between our two countries in pursuit of peace and progress and mutually beneficial developement.

Soon after assumption of office by Hon'ble Sher Bahadur Deuba as the Prime Minister of Nepal, PM spoke to him over the telephone and a congratulatory message was sent thereafter.

The enduring bonds of friendship between India and Nepal are strong and are based on mutual understanding and trust. Our relations have withstood the test of time and Internal developments in one country will not be allowed by either side to adversely affect the other and relations between the two.

The existing bilateral mechanisms between the two countries continue to be in operation. Agencies of the two governments are meeting regularly. Some of the Meetings held recently include the Fourth Meeting of the Joint Working Group on Border Management in June, 2001 and the Inter-Governmental Meeting to discuss matters relating to trade and Transit in August, 2001.

The External Affairs Minister, Shri Jaswant Singh, also paid a goodwill visit to Kathmandu from August 17 to 19, 2001. This was the first high level contact between the two governents since the enthronement of King Gyanendra on June 4, 2001.

Co-operation with Norway in IT Sector

3429. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is great scope and potential for economic co-operation in Information Technology Sector between India and Norway;

(b) if so, whether a good number of Norwegian companies have shown great interest in forging partnership with their counterparts in India;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether the Norwegian companies facing shortage of skilled persons in diverse areas presently would welcome to engage Indian professionals in IT Sector;

(e) if so, whether this would *inter alia* facilitate and ease appointment of Indian IT professionals who are presently facing problems of downturn exodus and unemployment in USA; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLGOY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Since the announcement of New Industrial Policy in August 1991, Government has approved 53 Foreign Direct Investment proposals and 24 Technical Collaboration proposals with Norway. With a view to explore feasibility of mutual cooperation a delegation led by Mr. Tore Sandvik, State Secretary at Norwegian Ministry of Trade and Industry visited India and had a meeting with Secretary IT on 19.3.2001. Following areas were identified for establishing co-operation between the two countries:

— IT Infrastructure
— Broadband communication technology
— Software application in hydro-power, sea-food industries
— Digital divide
— E-Governance

(d) to (f) Yes, Sir. Europe has been identified as potential market for Indian Software companies. Therefore, the efforts to make entry in European market would facilitate and ease appointment of India IT professionals who are presently facing problems due to recession in the U.S. industry.

Group on Consumer Electronic Sector in IT Ministry

3430. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have set up a Group on Consumer Electronic Sector in his Ministry;